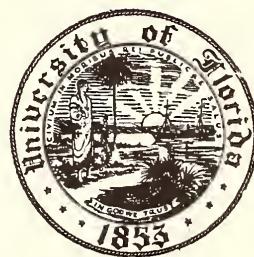


THE SINGING SWORD *

A Poem by G. Laurence Groom

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THE SINGING SWORD: A POEM
BY G. LAURENCE GROOM WITH
A FOREWORD BY RICHARD LE
GALLIENNE  DRAWINGS BY
CLINTON BALMER    

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
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To Mr. and Mrs. St. JOHN ADCOCK

}

FOREWORD

I MADE the acquaintance of Mrs. Laurence Groom's verse with this beautiful lyric:

Oh, they have laid my only dear, my pretty dear,
my lovely dear,

With all her laughter stilled and quiet lips without a sigh,

In the Stranger's land, a cruel land, that has no heart to understand;

And laden with my sorrow the wind goes keen-ing by.

Oh, she would lay her little hand, her tender hand, her toil-worn hand,

Within my own so softly at the closing of the day;
And resting so, and holding so, together we would homeward go,

Through misty, moonlit meadows all sweet with dewy hay,

And now I go the homeward way, the well-known way, the lonely way,

Through misty, moonlit meadow when the moon is riding high,

With the echo of her little feet, her dancing feet, her darling feet,

Within my heart forever until the day I die.

The spontaneous, tripping melody of this, its artful simplicity, its lover's tenderness, give it a rare place among contemporary lyrics. The reader will find it, with other lyrics of a like quality, in a volume entitled *The Ship of Destiny*, for which, by the way, Mr. G. K. Chesterton writes a preface. This volume unmistakably assures Mrs. Groom's rank as a lyric poet, and there are one or two poems included in it, such as "The Ballad of the Lost Soul," which indicated also that she had the gift of dramatic narrative in verse.

There are many signs that the story in verse is coming back, as well as other traditional forms, which, amusingly enough, have recently been in disgrace. From my acquaintance with "the latest birth of time" in America, that is, the authentic *les jeunes*, not *les jeunes* of forty or upward, I am very sure of this, and I have several volumes on my shelves of distinguished performance as well as promise, by young men and women little past twenty, to prove it.

The old forms, and "the shores of Old Romance," with these young writers, as with Mrs. Groom, are quite evidently reasserting their immemorial magic, but while their impulse is that of the young Keats:

Lo! I must tell a tale of chivalry;
For large white plumes are dancing in mine eye,
none of them, so far as I am aware, has achieved
any success comparable with the poem which the
reader has before him. In *The Singing Sword*,
Mrs. Groom has in a surprising degree recaptured
the glamour of the old troubadour romances of
knight and dame, and minstrels

Who wore their love like sword on thigh,
And kept not all their valour for their lute---
of "gramarye" and love-philtres, Gothic fanes,
mediaeval diablerie and the ecstasy of mediaeval
love. Out of such old materials she has made a
poem which is no mere decorative *pastiche*, but
which is vital with reality, a pictorial reality of the
scenes among which her figures move, no mere
tapestry figures, but beings of warm, wild, flesh
and blood, and the human reality of a moving
story, told with a romantic zest which holds us in
suspense, and carries us along from beginning to
end. The poem, too, is saturated with beauty,
beauty of scene, beauty of atmosphere, the beauty
of beautiful lovers, the beauty of passionate love,
and, not least, the beauty of beautiful writing. I
would particularly instance, in corroboration of
this high praise, the scene where Alys awaits in

the cathedral porch the working of the spell which is to draw her lover to her at midnight, also the love-scene between Queen Blanche and Thibault in the queen's chamber, written in admirable blank-verse. And that reminds me to say that one of the elements of Mrs. Groom's success is the wise craftsmanship with which she has varied the metres of the several books of her story. Thus she has avoided the monotony which too often dogs a long story in verse, and she has further guarded her readers from that by interspersing between the sections of the story lyrics that recall no little of the charm of the seventeenth century lyrists, perhaps Campion in particular. Above all, this is a love-poem, written with a fearless belief in the purity of a great passion, and an unblushing sincerity of utterance, to compare with which one must go back to Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, and Swinburne's *Tristram of Lyonesse*.

Richard Le Gallienne

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PROEM

*Many guises Love hath worn,
Many tongues have lent it song,
Who knows not Love shall go forlorn
And find the journey all too long.*

*Let us go out with dance and song,
Let us go out with pennons bright;
With glancing spear and couched lance,
And dare the day ere fall the night.*

*Still is Love the singing sword,
Singing over dust and doom.
Laugh to the skies, O best adored!
There is no laughter in the tomb.*

BOOK ONE

The Book of Alys



THE BOOK OF ALYS



HEN Rheims was young and
the town a-building,
Gay with statues and painters'
gilding,
Knights in mail and in doublets
bright
Walked, swords drawn, in the
streets at night;

The cut-purse lurked in the by-ways dark,
Gallants were stabbed and left cold and stark,
While the stars looked down from the purple skies
A-gleam in the pools of unseeing eyes.
Merchants who trafficked in silk and lace,
Flattered and sold with a courtly grace,
Gossamer veils and broidered shoes,
And all the vanities women use.
Afric slaves with their smiling faces
Bore from ships in the sea-port places
Jasper and jade and jewels a-plenty,
For comely matrons and maids o' twenty;
Delicate glass for their dainty fingers,
Platters of gold, where the fond gaze lingers,
Fragrant fruits from the scented east,
Strange conceits for the bridal feast;
Holy incense for altars' burning,

What time, the beads in her fingers turning
A sweet saint prays for a love less holy
With downcast eyelids and accents lowly.

Thibault the Proud, with his jousts and revels,
His black-browed, crop-haired, hireling devils;
Pike-men, bow-men, armourers, forgers,
All of them swillers of wine and gorgers---
Swaggered and shashed and ruffled and cursed,
God's mercy ! None knew were it best or worst,
An empty city and trade a-begging,
Or horses neighing and tents a-pegging,
Men a-swear ing, and maids a-peeping
When all good maids should be soundly sleeping.
For the trouble is this; where the young men are,
Small use to housen is bolt or bar:
For men are cunning and maids are kind,
As ever since time was out of mind.
Where the young heart flies will the light feet
follow,
Silent and swift as the homing swallow.

White Queen Blanche, with her stately seeming,
Took little heed of the city's teeming.
Thibault the Proud was her chosen squire,
Their love was mingled in sweet desire:

Tercel on wrist they would ride a-hawking,
And took small count of the folk a-talking.
Royal lovers at court were they,
Smiling and debonair, sweet and gay.
Cold was her wedded lord, and scheming,
Given to pious deeds and dreaming:
The great cathedral, at his command
Rose to the sculptor's and mason's hand.
Full three-parts of a monk was he,
Kindly, and gentle to chivalry;
A great-girthed man, and a quiet living,
Welcoming all comers, free in giving,
But deadly cold; thinking aye of supplying
Heaven with saints; less of living than dying.
Otherwise busy with matters of state,
Councillors seeking him early and late.
Now a woman warms to a fervent man,
But gives short shrift to a cold, nor can
Be humbled to ask what should come unspoken,
So small is the wonder if troth be broken.

White Queen Blanche had a fair tire-maiden
With all the promise of young June laden:
Red-gold hair like an amorous flame,
Cheeks where the swift blood ebbed and came,
Small, round breasts like rosebuds sweet,

Delicate hands and delicate feet;
And in some old rondel the minstrel tells
How her laugh was the chiming of silver bells.
Maudleys, merry, a thought coquettish,
Guillaumette, pouting, aye coy or pettish,
Fonder of kissing than maids should be---
Had many charms in their armoury.
Beatrix, haughty and cold of mien
To glance at a gallant was never seen,
Whilst little Perette out of Gascony
Scarce spoke at all, but of courtesy.
These young maidens, like stars a-gleaming,
Shone to the white Queen Blanche's dreaming
Light of the moon, so frail and fair,
Wistful gold was her moon-pale hair.
Set like a pearl in her mirrored glory,
Memoried ever in song and story,
Her long, white hands and her beauty slender
Drift down the years like a music tender.
But rarest of all in beauty's chalice
The red-gold glamour of maiden Alys.

Lovers, in sooth, she boasted plenty:
Jean, the sculptor, a youth of twenty,
Quick at a ruffle, and hot of blood,
Passionate, too, as a neap-tide flood. . . .

A quarrel had he with Louis the Red,
A feud to the death---or so 'twas said.
Louis the Red was a foxy youth
Who had small commerce with honour or truth,
A stab in the back in the dead of night---
In quarrel or fray was ne'er in the right;
Cheated at play and cheated the girls,
Hoaxed the reverend, flouted the churls:
A graver of shields when the humour took him,
A thief of the fields when that forsook him.
Was far too thick with the monks and friars,
Most of them time-servers, cheats, and liars,
Whose eyes went roving at matins and prime,
Who muttered the prayers like a scurvy rhyme;
In sooth, they were birds of the same black feather,
They and young Louis a-nodding together.
Little of life they aimed at missing,
And none too choice in the matter of kissing.
Black Sir Jocelyn Amorye,
Proven in war on land and sea;
Scarred Crusader, grizzled and gray,
With a courtly laugh, but a crafty way,
And Michel, a poet, the sculptor's friend,
Dreaming, where'er his way might wend,
Curled and scented, yet true as death:
He made sweet rhymes, he breathed sweet breath.

And maiden Alys pursued her way
With never a sign of a “Yea” or “Nay,”
And heeded no more than if jay or starling
Had suddenly taken to talking or snarling;
And none could tell if she loved or no,
So loved her more, for ’tis ever so;
The maids too willing and light to woo
Are never the maids that the men pursue.

ii

Only the starved soul shall know
The fullness of the days of youth,
Only when age’s tears o’erflow
Shall eyes behold with naked ruth
That flesh they gave to joy is dust,
That Beauty’s limbs may rot for lust.

All now is night where once was day,
The writhen limbs, the sapless flesh,
The talon hands, hair harsh and grey,
That once gleamed gold as sunshine’s mesh;
And feet so dainty pink and white,
Now better hid from all men’s sight.

Aye, prate ye not of honoured age
To beldames crouching round the fire,

Eld is not ever cold nor sage;
Heed, lest you rouse, unknown, the ire
Of one whose breast is no more cold
Than in her flaming days of gold.

Oh, youth we envy, youth we hate,
That treads the path that once was ours:
That enters at our secret gate,
And gathers thoughtless, of our flowers.
Usurpers of the silken bed,
How should we hate not, being dead?

iii

Maund the witch with her herbs and simples,
Her cures for the spleen and receipts for dimples,
Strange love-philtres the maids would buy,
Charms to dazzle a lover's eye---
Was friend or foe to half the city,
The young and the old, aye, more's the pity,
Though few were better, nor many the worse
For power of her blessing or bane of her curse.
Bent as a crescent moon, she stumbled
To and fro in her hut, and grumbled
Times were hard for an honest woman,
These days folk, they were less than human;
The maids didn't love as they used to do,

And the lads hadn't gotten their milk-teeth through.
Old and wrinkled, and all but double,
The ebb and flow of a city's trouble.

Frowning, Sir Jocelyn Amorye,
Dagger on hip and hand on knee,
Perched, like a satyr, cheek by jowl
With the witch and her toads and screeching owl.
None of them frightened the knight one jot,
In the East he'd seen wonders to beggar the lot,
Which he and the dame well understood,
For both of them came of the same black brood.
"A truce to your addled fancies, Mother,
Hen-bane or rat's-bane, one or t'other;
At least, I've gotten my milk-teeth through,
Enough to set faith in no beldame's brew,
Tell me the lad for the game in hand,
Silent and swift as ye understand;
A purse-full of nobles for both, if done
Betwixt the dusk and the rise of sun."
"Louis the Red's your man," quoth she,
"Neither the crown nor the cowl fears he;
And if maid Alys' a mind to wed,
He'll know where to fetch ye a shaven head
Will solemnly mutter and addle the prayers
'Ere you and your lady be bedded upstairs,

And none so fast but may lief be broken,
As if no troth nor no plight were spoken."

Sudden a shadow the doorway darkened,
Beldame and knight looked up, and hearkened
The flute-like tones of a maid. "Good-morrow,
Friends, God shield all hearts from sorrow."
"Save you, Mistress---Dame Maund, for charm
To bind my jennet from blight and harm
These rose-nobles." And so, was gone,
With "More, when the charm has worked, anon."
"Mother, I die for love!" quoth she.
"Cold as the stone he carves is he,
Carving an image of Saint Catherine
He works at the stone as if 't had been
Flesh to his touch and warm to his hand,
Whilst I, the woman, silently stand
Cold as the marble he worships, I tremble
With longing a maid must for shame, dissemble.
There, with my very air she stands,
Her saintly symbols in clay-cold hands,
His eyes appraise me, but only caring
If like be like, with cold comparing,
And 'Save you, sweet Alys, your courtesy
Has given me immortality.'
When all my heart is a-crying, crying

Within those strong brown arms to be lying.
A charm, good Mother, so that dark eye
May kindle and flame as I pass by,
That the image of clay may be overthrown
'Ere I become a woman of stone,
My heart burned out and my eyes grown dim,
And my soul accursèd for love of him;
Already my cheek grows thin and pale."
With both white hands she raised her veil.

Maund, the witch, now old and toothless,
Had once been lovely, young and ruthless,
Her beauty had made all men adore her,
Kings had bowed in the dust before her;
Princes had paid in blood and gold
For her bosom's pride and white arms' fold:
Youth she cursed for her long-gone rapture,
And joys no charms might e'er recapture.
Deep she looked in those sea-blue eyes,
Cold, and hungry, and over-wise,
Long she fingered the silken hair
Where the firelight reddened it here and there;
Marked the mould of the proud young breast,
Chuckled to think whose head should rest
'Twixt those twin towers where none had lain.
So had she laughed when men were slain.

“You are a flame, white Alys,” she said,
“From your maiden feet to your golden head;
Why should you long for an artist youth?
Such have never nor gold nor truth.
Kings and nobles would fight for you,
For your eyes of fire and your lips of dew,
Let no man make you a sad-eyed mother,
Laugh in the arms of one and another.
Gallant, who’ll treasure you honey-sweet,
Never barefoot on the cobbled street,---
Borne in a silken-tasselled litter
You’ll watch the scarlet harness glitter
On snow-white arabs, whose proud heads toss
To golden crescent or blood-red cross.
What have you for the craftsman, maiden?
The lot of the poor is heavy-laden.”

“Mother, good Mother, have you known love?”
“Yea, by the powers that reign above!
Yea, by the fiends that reign below!
What if my scanty locks be snow,
And my old bones rattle and pierce my skin?
By this same door love entered in,
To this same end shall your beauty come!”
She rent her robe. The maid stared, dumb.
“Well, if you will,” said Maund, the witch,

"Gold to gold, as pitch to pitch,
Like will ever to like 'tis said,
Your gold locks to his black head:
Youth to youth in its thoughtless folly,
Breeding for age's melancholy.
Charms, from a woman old and wise?
Better to trust those soft blue eyes!"

Listen! Your love makes dim midnight
With torches' flaming ardour bright;
His labours o'er, he seeks God's fane,
To bless the morrow's task again,
His latest look, your sculptured face.
Set the sweet, breathing form in place
There, in the white cathedral door.
Strew then upon that sacred floor
These herbs that ease a lover's pain,
Rue and pale lavender, vervain,
Rosemary, and the dark nightshade,
That he forget, aye, every maid
Save one, and in your heart call Love!
Come like the dove to mating dove!
This charm, these herbs in circle strewn,
He steps within, he bides your own.
Bind your veil close about your eyes,
One look and lo! the winged spell flies;

Speak not, nor trust your beauty's charms
Even within his longing arms,
Ere, softly couched, his lips shall seek
Your own, then only, wake and speak;
Whatso strange marvels whispering come
Be blind, and as the dead lie, dumb."

"Mother, it is the dead I fear!
Midnight, and maybe no man near;
Lost souls 'tis known have dreadful power
Upon the world in that black hour."

"Then, if you will, go lone to bed.
Cold you'll couch among the dead."

"Nay! then I, quick, am thrust in Hell!
I pluck my herbs, I weave my spell."

iv

Oh, long ago, when I was young,
Men flattered me with pen and tongue,
And I was queen of a fairy court,
When youth was in its heyday.

Then I was robed in gold and silk,
My dainty hands were white as milk,
My lovers sighed if I said naught,
When youth was in its heyday.

I feasted, then, the whole night through,
I triumphed as a queen should do,
Did I but frown my Love bowed down,
When youth was in its heyday.

But now that I am poor and old,
My bones may rattle with the cold. . . .
Over my head in a silken gown,
Men lead their loves to field and down,
With song and jest, in a broidered vest,
For youth is ever the honoured guest,
And always in his heyday.

INTERLUDE

ALYS SINGS:

*Nor hawk nor hound doth please me,
The other maidens tease me,
“Why is thy cheek so pale?”
My hands are white as milk,
My hair is soft as silk,
Do I not please thee?*

*The apple-blossoms fall
Beside the castle wall,
I see them float
Where toad and newt abide,
A-down the sluggish tide
Of the deep moat.*

*The nightingale his song
Doth trill the whole night long,
The swift bats dip
Against the torches' glow,
The while my tears do flow
And salt my lip.*

*Were I some fairy maid,
Then would I, unafraid,
 My hair let fall
From out this casement high,
If but my love passed by,
 And on him call.*

*Won by that magic stair,
Then should he find me fair,
 Nor so unkind;
The stag calls to the deer
Who cometh without fear,
 And of one mind
They couch in dappled shade
Till morning, unafraid
 In that sweet lair.*

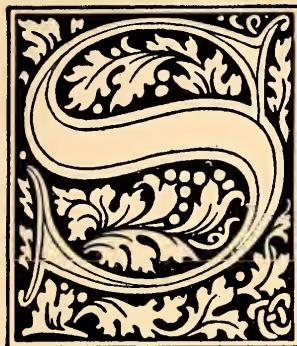
*Nor songs nor dancing please me,
The other lads do tease me,
 “ She pouts her lip. ”
They plague with laugh and tear:
I cannot be their dear
 Nor with them trip.*

BOOK TWO

The Book of Jean



THE BOOK OF JEAN



WEET saint, pure and holy,
Oh, might I
Greet my lady lowly
As she goes by.
Kiss her tiny feet of silver,
Hold her hands that would
be flown,
Woo her, woo her till I fold her
All mine own.

Sad saint of maids unspousèd,
Oh, must I
Ever wander so, unhousèd
As lone birds fly?
Whisper, whisper to her beauty
That she break no mould in dying
Lest she do a sin unknowing;
Oh, might I

Fill her as a cup of silver
Till she flow
Into bud and into blossom
Pale as snow.

Bud and bloom and new beginning,
Joy beyond all joys for winning;
Love, bend low!

ii

The chisel from his weary fingers fell,
Ringing upon the stones with hollow sound,
The virgin saint, in that loved likeness wrought
Seemed as awakening in stillness as profound
As e'er soul spoke to soul in. All around
The shadows of lamp-flame made elfin play
Upon the opposing figure wrought in clay.

“Here comes her dimple when she smiles, hence
flows
The music of her voice betwixt those lips
Tinct with the vermeil of the summer rose,
Here the long hands taper to finger-tips;
Here, 'neath her gentle brow the sweet thought
goes
’Twixt tears and laughter from its hidden source,
But whence, and what toward, no mortal
knows.

“Here is her maiden bosom, locked from man;
The summer breeze therein has liberty

To stir the lawn that veils those hills from sight,
Until it swoon of its own ecstasy.

Here, from the folds of her close-girdled robe
The slender, silver-sandalled feet fall light
As moonbeams on the gossamers this night.

“She should be lapped in silks and miniver,
Upon a milk-white steed should she be set,
That earth’s dark soil touch not the feet of her,
The jewel of price in all love’s coronet.
She should be sung to sleep by lovely boys
Touching the viol with scented fingers’ play,
To music innocent and bright as they.

“But I, how lowly and how poor, unknown;
A vagrant ’prentice to a vagrant trade;
Here, with these hands I touch her sculptured face,
The imaged form, unworthy, they have made
In some poor semblance of her fleshly grace
That is, unknown, her monument and mine,
Set on a pinnacle in God’s high place.

“Be still, be still, O flesh that cries for love!
For hand to hand, for lip to lip, be still!
Not for all feet the flower-strewn fields above,
For some the flinty way, the wind-stormed hill,

The wrestling with the dragons in the dark,
The resignation to opposing will,
Death before morning wake the nested lark.

“Rest gently in your chilly robe, O clay!
Sweet earth whereof we were created too,
But given breath to aspire toward the day,
Hearts to be wrung, and hands to work, to pray
For some achievement for mankind to view,
Voiceless, yet speaking in the light of day
From out the soul these hands have given you.”

Fit for a limner of a psalter, straight,
Swarthy, broad-shouldered, slim of hip, he stood,
As pliant as a sapling in a wood.
You'd see him with a sword, set in a gate,
Whilst he made merry play with the bright blade;
A man to catch the eye of any maid,
And set her dreaming early, waking late.

The moon peeped o'er the housetops, down the street,
He heard the tramp of footsteps, watched them by,
The lusty armourers, black with smoke and sweat,
Their leathern jerkins open to the sky.

Full-bearded, huge, they roared their way along,
Their white teeth gleamed, eyes flashed the moon-
beams back,
Jean envied them their joyance and their song.

iii

*"Up in the morning early,
We all drink deep at sundown,
Hammer and mallet are better than pallet---
Cider and wine are both of 'em fine
For gullets as dry as ours.
When sparks fly up in showers
From morn till night: we'll drink till light---
Oh, a life for a man is ours!"*

*"Fie on the shield engravers
Who won't drink deep at sundown,
Graving away is mere child's play---
A steady hand, the poor fools say
Is meet for a trade like ours.
Tracing their tricksy flowers
On the shields we wrought as true men
ought---
Oh, a life for a man is ours!"*

*"Up in the morning early,
We all drink deep at sundown,
The wenches say as we pass their way,
Cider and wine are both of 'em fine
In brawny brown arms like ours.
We dandle the dears for hours,
And damn the engravers, the pale-faced
shavers---
Oh, a life for a man is ours!"*

iv

In the cathedral porch young Alys stood,
Binding her veil about her brow, her heart
Beat till it sounded in her ears so loud
She thought one must have heard it in the wood.
Then some strange vision of a chilly shroud,
And death without delight: she almost cried
For help, then held her breath, all motion, voice,
denied.

Silence, she thought, the old witch said no sound,
Spells all are vain if they be broken through.
She stood in silence as a lake profound,
Around her fell the evening's heavy dew;
She heard the armourers singing down the street,

And after that a bird's song, crystal-clear,
And after that no sound that anyone might hear.

On unresponsive stone her herbs she strewed,
Wordless, but all her heart was one loud cry;
"Come, Love; come, Love, nor pass your
darling by!"

And wondered where he walked, and how he
stood,
Or if he knew the spell that drew him nigh.
Sudden an owlet screeched from out the wood,
And swift, soft wings rushed past her like a whis-
pering sigh.

"Dear God," she prayed, "Sweet Son of Mary,
Maid,
Bend down and hearken from Thy starry spheres!
Tho' I do sin, I pray Thee, unafraid,
Pardon, love strips the veriest coward of fears.
Sad Mother, tender Virgin, Thou, dismayed,
Didst stand, like Danae, in the heavenly showers,
In gardens lily-wrought where Thy young feet
had strayed."

Hands raised, she stood a monument to love,
Lips parted, sweet head up in listening pose:

Her bright hair turned to silver, all her rose
Of lip and cheek turned to an ashen grey,
A phantom of her merry self by day.
So thought Red Louis, and a cowl that spread
The unsuspected net for that desired head.

Lost in her trance she felt the strong arms bind,
Her heart, tumultuous, beat, Lo! he is come!
But yet no lips that seek her own, nor find
The charm to loose the melody held dumb
Through that sweet faith: as wistful as the wind
That through deserted chambers moans and
sighs---
So swept love's witched faith through that
enchanted mind.

She almost swooned, then, to a quickened sense
Footsteps were not the same, the arms that held
Pressed not with longing, nor with that intense
Sweet kindness as the lover she beheld
With long, wise fingers moulding the sad clay,
As if his soul with that dull earth would blend,
If but intention would the patient will obey.

Unmindful of the spell her veil she rent,
Saw Louis' eyes, as hot as his wild hair:



Then, with a strength fainting, and well-nigh
spent,
Shrieked with her lover's name upon the air
Thrice, ere a hand closed up the writhing lips....
The straining foot upon the white stone slips---
Then silence, and the scent of trod herbs, Love's
vain care.

v

“**T**wice and thrice on the hush of night
I heard her voice in terror crying!”
Swift ran Jean to the herb-strewn place,
And the misty drift where her veil was lying.

Saw three shadows that ran and stumbled,
After them flew, one struck, he fumbled,
His falcon's whistle and gave a call.

Swift as the tercel, or gold-eyed merlin
Stooping to strike a heron, winging
Home from the fish-stream, a youth near-by,
Laid down a lute and stilled his singing.

Caught up his dagger, flung down a script,
A song in honour of Blanche, the Queen;
Off his cloak in a fury stript,
Knowing well what the call must mean.

Surely that Jean, his mate, his friend,
Cried "To me!" in a signal known
But to these two, who had learned together
To love the gleam of a hawk's gay feather,
And the end of a chase well flown.

Over the stones, arms locked, they ran:
Battered the tavern door, burst in,
Swayed, half choked by the stench and din,
Facing the armourer's cheerful grin.

"Which way went they, the scurvy knaves?"
Arming themselves with pikes and staves,
Dropping the wenches helter-skelter,
Who shrieked and ran for a safer shelter.

"This way---that---" the town was a-humming;
Windows and doors alive with faces,
Feet raced on with a steady drumming;
Gentlewomen in silks and laces,
Called to their cavaliers to shield them;
Surely the king's own keep was a-fire!
Drawing their swords, all ripe for a revel,
Each son followed his sire.

Wrenching torches from bower and cresset;
Red fire fought with the moon's blue light,

On--till the tower of Amorye loomed
Black, on the star-filled height,

Only a loop-hole smouldering red,
A door that opened to let three in ;
But the quarry was sighted, Louis, whose head
Had better have been in any girl's bed
Than helping the black knight's sin.

In through the doorway, left unguarded
Save for a pike-man, easily tumbled:---
Swarmed the armourers; up the stairway,
Tortuous, twisted, young Jean stumbled.

To fall, flung back on the smoke-grimed arms.
Amorye stood with blue blade drawn,
Black eyes flashing and red lips sneering,
Hither and thither his quick glance veering,
Ready for all alarms.

Alys lay on the rush-strewn floor,
A shivering, craven friar above her;
Jean, thrown back to his feet, came on,
Mute, but a brain that throbbed "I love her!"

Louis leaped like a wolf, teeth bared,
Red hair flying, half-stripped and bleeding,

Round them in circle, the torches flared,
Fought they in silence, grim-eyed, unheeding.

Young Jean drew out his blade, red-dripping.
“Son of a blowsy tavern-trollop!”

A rough voice roared, as the feet ceased slipping,
“Good, my bravo! minced to a collop!”

Jean turned sick and the flames went black;
Amorye sheathed his sword, still grinning,
Kicked Red Louis, who lay on his back,
Done for ever with this world’s sinning.

Shoulder-high down the stair they bore them,
Still as death, and the black knight’s laughter
Journeyed into the night before them,
Closing in as it followed after.

Knights strode back to their ladies, gallants
Stole to their light o’ loves, streets darkened,
Doors were barred and the torches quenched;
Any who listened or cared, had hearkened.

Only the armourers’ song a-swinging
Left and right down the cobbled street,
And through it all a bird-song, winging
Over the housetops, pure and sweet.

INTERLUDE

THIBAULT SINGS:

*The ancient loves the poets sung,
How swiftly have they fled away,
To those dim isles of faery, hung
Beyond the bounds of night and day,
Frail phantoms of the pale sea-spray.*

*Oh, what are Helen's lips and brow
That fired the Grecian warriors when
To Paris' kiss she swooned? Ah, thou
That sett'st a-dream all living men,
As thou art now was Helen then.*



BOOK THREE

The Book of Queen Blanche

THE BOOK OF QUEEN BLANCHE



N the Queen's chamber, where
a curved lamp
Perfumed the air with spices
of the East,
Sat Alys pale, but wakened
from her swoon.
The stately Beatrix, with a
scornful lip

For maids that ventured out at night, alone,
Laid down the ivory fan, the essence-phial,
Curtsied, and, at the Queen's dismissal, went,
Sweetly disdainful, in her azure robe,
Her eyes as brilliant and as hard as jewels.

She knew

That Thibault waited for his mistress' word,
That Alys, now recovered, would keep watch
Till midnight, and the king returned from prayers.
She dropped the arras with disdainful hand,
They heard her footfall cross the ante-room;
Then turned the Queen to Alys, "Well, my girl,
What did you from the castle at such hours?"
"I went to weave a spell." "For what?" "For love,
There's one who loves me not, and whom I love."
"Fie, girl, to love unsought!" "But if it worked

He would not know, and he would turn to me
With eyes that kindled, and with hands that sought." "
The pale Queen saw the maid's eyes brimmed
with tears,
The red lips quiver, and the white teeth set
A bond on their betrayal, and the hands
That sought to order the dishevelled hair
Trembled and could not well perform their task.
Then, as a hind will turn at last, at bay
Upon the hounds that harry her sleek sides,
Alys' blue eyes flashed fire upon the Queen,
And all defence was down, and the stark soul
Cried from the primal forests of despair.

"Good Madam, is't immodest in a maid
To wish for love? You, with the gentle Thibault
Make amorous play, you bid me watch the door
Lest any come and break your twinéd joys.
In yon cold ante-chamber have I sate,
The broidery-needle idle in my hand,
Listening, perforce, to your sweet moans and cries:
Lest others hear them do I hug the door,
And mine own jealousy, not of your Love,
But of the joys you take within his arms.



“One day last June, you left the door a-jar, so hot
The sun had baked the walls we scarce could
breathe,

Nor bear the heavy silks that gird us up;
I saw young Thibault naked as a god
Leap in the sunlight into your wide arms,
His body bronze from bathing in the sun,
The rippling shoulder-muscles, as he clasped
Were lovely as a crouching panther's when
He leaps at twilight on his quivering prey.
There must I sit and listen, as some soul
Shut out of heaven and hears the harps within;
And all my body answering love's call.”

The young Queen drooped her head, and, either
side

The heavy braids fell down unto her knees,
One slender hand she laid on Alys' own,
Clasping it gently as a sister might.

“You love young Jean so well?” “So well, so well
That I would strip me of these lustrous silks,
These pearls, these turquoise, that were my delight,
Tear the embroidered sandals from my feet,
And wander, barefoot, in a peasant's smock,

Braving the snow in winter on my head,
The scorching sun, and the inclement rains
Shelterless, would he bear me company."

"Child," cried the Queen, and raised her sweet,
sad eyes,

"Had I the courage of your love, I'd do
The same by my Lord Thibault, for the King
Doth hold the flesh as sin, I know he makes
Long prayers and penance for his zest in me,
And prays God pardon his incontinence.

I never will, nor would I suffer more

But for the child that greatens in my womb.

'Tis Thibault's, but the King doth deem it his;
I smile in secret, that he so should use

My body to get heirs on. When they call
The courtiers in to hear my labour-cries
And see the new-born heir held up for them,
There shall be no such joy, I warrant me

In all sweet France that day as mine, who bear
A son conceivéd in such ecstasy. This creed

That scorns delight in Nature is perverse,
And breeds, not holiness, but sin and lies."

Now, for repose, young Alys has unlaced
The warm and fragrant bodice of the Queen,
The blue-veined breasts, soon heavy for the task

That shall be theirs, the suckling of sweet babes,
Now fount for lover's lips and revellings,
Peeped into view. "Keep guard, sweet Alys this
I promise you, ere these two days be gone
You shall come running to me, and shall tell
'Twixt tears and laughter of your own dear bliss."
Like unto graceful swans that arch their necks
So to caress each other with their beaks,
The women kissed. . . . Soon, from the couch
of lawn
And flowered damask, did a soft voice call,
"Oh, Love; Oh, Love!" and then, "Oh, Love!
again,
"A little mercy." But the laugh was there,
That bids love disregard the happy pleas
And press the siege anew. . . .
Upon her breast young Thibault sank, fordone,
And pale as moonlight; so they lay, and heard
Between their mingled sighs and ecstasies
The happy Alys singing to herself.

*“Here’s blue,
Dare I choose you?
’Tis for Our Lady’s robe,
And she
Is holy chastity.*

*“Here’s white---
Not even you!
Pale maids must go
In shroud of snow
To their cold bed.
Ah, no!*

*“Here’s gold
My fingers hold;
Nay, gold’s untrue,
False love is bought and sold
For gold.*

*“Here’s green,
As rivers flowing,
They glide unknowing
Whither they go,
I know.*

*“Here’s red
For maidenhead,
For roses sweet to strew
On bridal-bed;
Ah, I choose you,
Choose you!”*



BOOK FOUR

The Book of Michel



THE BOOK OF MICHEL



NVEIL love's tragic ghost,
And see the white skull grin,
Strip off the crown of amaranth
That hides the worms within.

And you have kissed that
mouth,

From which men start in fear;
And fondled that uncleanly thing,
And mourned it with love's tear.

Enrobed it all in silk,
And dreamed its voice caressed,
Have lain within the churchyard arms
Upon the hollow breast.

Is it for this you weep,
O, bright immortal thing
That soars above the body's lust
Upon a deathless wing?

ii

How many souls that seek relief
From prison of their unbelief;

No woman wholly true nor fair,
Seen through that mist of dull despair.

The lark has no such doubt, but wings
Heavenward, upon intrepid wings,
And no man hearing him but longs
For his sweet faith and dew-bright songs.

The bee upon the heather bell,
By instinct knows its purpose well;
Secure that honey bides for him,
He drinks the nectar to the brim.

The daisied field, the silver rill,
Are passive to the seasons' will,
Though snow and frost shall bind them dumb
They wait, at peace, till spring be come.

Only man's little self-conceit
Sees toils and snares about his feet;
He rends himself on his own rack,
Unconscious 'tis himself doth lack.

Oh, man! poor body of small worth,
Pre-destined to the primal earth,
Are you not lesser than all these,
The lark, the fields, bright rill, brown bees?

Why should you question, being blind,
The purpose of the Almighty Mind?
And, fallible as others, then
Pass judgment on your fellow-men?

Oh, poor and foolish lack-belief!
Behold the falling of the leaf,
The budding of the tender green,
From each year learn what life should mean.

Shut not your piteous soul in sin,
Open your heart and let love in,
And quest life's honey like the bees,
There's something fair in all man sees.

Look up, with eyes that seek no gain,
Into God's heaven through sun and rain,
And learn humility, nor scan
Too jealously, your brother, man.

iii

“So-ho! my fine young fancy poet!
Put up your parchment and bestow it.
You're called to the King's hall; last night
They say that you were in the fight.”

The archer leaned upon his bow,
His keen eyes roving to and fro,
The fair-haired poet, young and slim,
Laid down his quill to follow him.

His breviary within his breast
Laid, and closed up the silken vest,
The parchment rolled, placed on a shelf
Where a small kitten sunned himself.

Stooped to caress the mother cat,
Curled in the window, sleek and fat,
“Yea, I was in it, good my friend,
And Louis made a most fit end.”

“He was a rascal, sure enough,
Nothing in him but base-born stuff,
Never fought fair, and Jean saw red,
And thank the Lord God the bastard’s dead.”

Michel laughed, but the archer’s whack
Made him wince, and then leap back,
“My shoulder’s slashed like a bladder o’ lard,
And the left arm stiff---my brave, hold hard!”

Half the town that had turned out late,
Was gathered about the king’s high gate,

Louis had just been carried in,
Louis, who died in mortal sin.

The shivering friar, with pinched, white face,
Well-nigh ran through the market-place,
Whilst a couple of pike-men, primed for fun,
Nigh finished what fear had well begun.

In a curule chair on the dais high,
In the King's great hall, his knights hard by,
The King sat, cold as his own sheathed steel,
None could tell what his heart might feel.

Below stood Jean, with set, white face,
Weak with his wounds, and in her place
Alys stood, near the Queen's fair head
Her bright hair gleamed in the sun, gold-red.

“Here's young Michel.” The King looked
down,
“I'll have no brawling in good Rheims town.
No modest maid but should be a-bed
When midnight falls, shame bow her head.”

Up rose Blanche in her pearl-fair beauty,
Holding pale Alys by the hand.
“Prate not ever of cold, hard duty,
There's love, which some of us understand.

“Who is not foolish in life’s young hey-day?
Once, and how brief, is our mortal may-day,
Bind ye the garlands on each young head,
Send for the bishop, let mass be said.

“Let them be shrived of sin and sorrow,
Wedded in joy, and bedded to-morrow,
Glad in each other as youth should be!”
Then, to the dais strode Amorye.

“Take I the cross to Acre’s field,
I will begone with lance and shield,
Do such penance as may befit,
And so make a decent end of it.

“At your mercy I bend the knee,
Grace, O King! of your courtesy.”
The King looked down and the Queen
looked up,
Her kind eyes brimmed like a chalice-cup.

“So shall it be.” The cold King smiled,
Warm in his heart the hope of a child,
Whispered that hour by Blanche his wife,
He lived that day, one day in a life!

“Strip the friar of his frock, and let him
Loose in the streets, and so, forget him.”

Ready hands made rags of the cowl,
None too fond of such midnight fowl.

The archers, guarding him---down the street,
Sought a tavern where wine was sweet,
Waiting their prey, the townsfolk got him,
Beat him half-dead, and prompt, forgot him.

Alys and Jean, their fingers twining,
Half-unbelieving, with young eyes shining,
Only remembered that each was blest,
Black head bowed to red-gold crest.

“Swift must I write them a marriage song.”
Michel hurried his way along;
Amorye strode through the folk, a-humming,
Heedless alike, of going or coming.

“To him who loves their beauty
All women are fair,
Brown or red or golden
’Tis neither here nor there.
And he who knows his way about
Shall find them everywhere!”

INTERLUDE

MICHEL SINGS:

*I love no maid, but unafraid
I pray for grace and pardon
From every fair who binds her hair
With garlands from love's garden.
I call, they come,
For joy they're dumb
Awhile in kind embraces,
Then cry, "Oh, fie! should one come by,
How tossed my silks and laces!"
But well they know
The best flowers grow
In such secluded places.*

*Finger to lip
They softly trip
To tryst, the pretty darlings,
All warm into my arms they slip
Chattering like the starlings,
I bow, they dip,
With glowing lip,
And, lute against my shoulder,*

*I woo them oft with music soft
Until they have grown bolder.*

*Then, hey for the hidden garden-close,
You may pluck the lily, but I shall pluck
the rose.*

*And all good lovers know where it grows:
In the heart of love's own garden!*



BOOK FIVE

The Book of Jean and Alys

THE BOOK OF JEAN AND ALYS



H, BEAUTY, folded softly, un-
awake,
Oh, heart, that holds but
dreams of childhood's years,
Unwistful of the morrow how
you take
The young Love, though
his guerdon be but tears.

Oh, secret petals that at dawn unclose,
How many burning noons shall parch you dry,
How many careless fingers scorn the rose
That falls beneath the foot of passer-by?

Yet the long years that eat your beauty up,
For all they take shall leave a richer boon,
Filling your heart with knowledge, as a cup
The river brims unto the silent moon.

And peace, that will not stay impatient youth,
And memory, the pictured scroll of life;
The quiet-eyed, the many-coloured truth,
Shall show the vanity of earthly strife.

Then, when your gentleness returns to earth,

Like a new lover shall she seek your breast,
Bringing your beauty to a swift re-birth,
In flower and tree, by those same winds caressed

That filled you with the living breath of God,
That brought you bird-song, and the scent of
flowers,

That buoyed your feet that they as lightly trod
As love-thoughts dancing down the honeyed
hours.

And you shall live in hearts of those you loved,
In written page, and in the sculptured stone,
In every thought that your beloveds moved,
Through centuries as yet unguessed, unknown.

Oh, beauty, breathing softly in the night,
Oh, beauty, beauty, that is close on tears;
How many deaths have made your garment bright,
And sung your song eternal in our ears!

ii

Service done and the bells a-ringing,
Acolytes with their censers swinging,
Echo of song in their round young throats,

Moved to the swelling organ-notes
Down the aisle out into the street,
Into the sunshine pure and sweet.
Then, hand-fasted, young Jean and Alys,
Lips yet dewy from God's own chalice.
Feet that trod upon flowers, the stones
They felt as little as age's bones;
After them Guillaumette, Maudleys, too,
And Beatrix gay in her gown of blue.
Little Perette, with bright eyes glancing
Hither and thither, was almost dancing,
All of their tongues in a lively chatter
About---ay---marry---what does it matter?
Michel, brave in his points and laces
Green and gold, was a-studying faces,
Pale Queen Blanche and her wedded lord,
Crop-haired Thibault, the best-adored,
Amorye, black, and lean and grey,
Laughing at girls when they looked his way;
As most of them did, after last night's story,
The ass in a lion's skin of glory.
Overhead went the great bells swinging:
Still the cathedral vaults were ringing
With vows not uttered by lips alone;
Warm from their knees the altar-stone,
Cold in his shroud lay Louis the Red,

Cheek by jowl the living and dead.
They to their couch with garlands sweet,
He, to the worms in a winding-sheet.

Maund the witch, with her rheumy eyes,
Cold and cruel, and over-wise,
Moaned for the gold she should have got,
And cursed young blood that it ran so hot.
Into the sunshine, as they came by,
Tottered she out of her loathsome sty,
With one lean talon a toad caressed,
A snake from the doorway raised its crest.
“Dust to dust, and night to day,
Here comes Death on a holiday!
Under your fair and blooming flesh,
Death is weaving his destined mesh;
A bleached white skull under each white brow,
You think you dance to your piping now,
But Death, the piper, is piping to you,
I hear his pipes, I smell Death’s brew.”
Alys blanched as they passed by,
But pity shone in her soft, blue eye,
Sudden she saw poor age’s sorrow,
Sudden near wept for youth’s to-morrow.
Amorye threw her a piece of gold,
Down on her knees she ceased to scold,

Searching about in the grey June dust
For another bauble of age's lust.

A score of youths in blue and gold
Fanfare down from the King's high hold,
Into the festival, peacock-spread,
By golden trumpets the way was led:
The King's own trumpets---the King's own fool
Cracking his jests proclaimed misrule;
Even the bishop, once seated there,
Looked on the viands and found them fair.
Silent the lovers leaned together,
Scarce believing such sunny weather;
Fearing the roof might fall in twain,
Something would sunder them once again.
The wine-cups' clatter, the serving-boys,
The laughter, the chatter, the dinning noise
Passed like a pageant, a dream half-told,
Scarcely they raised their cups of gold.

“Way for the minstrels! hey for the singing!”
Lusty shouts set the rafters ringing,
Calling for Michel, viol and lute,
And the Queen's young page in a childish flute
Begged for a silence and went unheard,
Which ruffled his feathers, the pert young bird.

Michel sprang to the dais, bowed,
Blanche smiled softly, hushed was the crowd
Making feast in the lower hall.
A happy silence fell on them all
As the poet, haloed by his fair curls,
Smiled in the face of the Queen's bright girls.
Softly his fingers touched the strings,
Vagrant as dipping of swallows' wings
Till a tune came tripping and rippling and dancing,
Veiling eyes that had just been glancing
Boldly coquettish; a moment after
It echoed, mocked, and sobbed with laughter,
Then swelled into a fuller measure,
And each lad dreamed of his own heart's treasure.

“Come, all you lovely joys that hover near,
On rosy wings and rainbow-arched, bend low,
Sing to these two the song none else may hear,
O bright, O beautiful, O heavenly dear!

Roses, that buds do ope in the morn's eye,
Roses, full-blown, that droop to the sun's rays;
Whenas the young breeze, like a lover's sigh
Rifle your sweetness, when these two pass by,
Bid him strew petals in their lovely ways.

Daisies, pink-tipped where Venus' feet have
stepped,

Light as love's kisses, white as a swan's breast,
Fields where Aurora leaps the starry crest,
Give of your bounty, O divinely blest!

Ye streams that mirror nymphs' bright faces
small,

And bathe their shy, wild limbs, and gem their
hair,

You have your charms, your secret joys, your
thrall

To draw the woodland creatures from their lair:
Call these to your cool caverns, speak them fair.

Give of your steadfast strength, O lofty trees!
You silver beech, towered elm, and dryad oak,
You twined briar-branches of the bosomed leas,
That hide the young birds and the furry folk
That make their nests in grass about your knees.

Bless then these two, who common kinship make
With the high gods, and with all Nature's kind;
Give them the rapture that shall not forsake
Their memory when at length they rest shall find
In that dear earth wherein their joys did wake,

Infused with a purpose and a mind,
That into these twin shapes through birth did
bind.

But now, in youth's bright fantasy caressed,
Fling your star-garlands, veil their eyes in mist,
That each no further than the other's breast
May see, nor roses, but a mouth new-kissed,
And every dawn a dream of amethyst.

Come, then, you lovely joys that hover near
On rosy wings and rainbow-arched, bend low,
Sing to these two the song none else may hear,
O bright, O beautiful, O heavenly dear!

iii

In the still midnight, lit by one tall flame
That gleamed on silken couch and arrassed wall,
The bridemaids skirmished out, the door shut fast,
Jean softly on his darling's name did call,
So soft, the silence scarce was broke at all.

Clad in her robe of broidered silk she stood,
One pearly shoulder touched by the flame's fire,
The other lovely pillow of desire

Barred by the moon that through the window
made
A crystal purity of that sweet shade.

Her longing bosom quickened, hands out-flung
She turned, lips parted, and her choiring throat
Tuned to the answer of the true love-note,
Her eyes as bright and shy as bird's at dawn,
No maiden she to pine and sigh forlorn.

“More lovely than a dream, yet as a dream
I fear the dawn will ravish thee away
To some celestial clime; the while I stray
With eyes and hands unblessèd, as erstwhile
I longed, but might not hope upon thy smile.

Touch thou my brow with those long fingers,
Sweet,
And I will close my eyes, lest I should swoon;
Too great the joy, and the delight too soon!
I dare not deem thee very flesh, nor hold
Within these arms thy white, thy rose, thy gold.”

And not a breath upon the midnight moved,
As with their eyes those fair young lovers loved
With gaze of adoration each on each;
The silence sang too loud for any speech,

The song of swords was clamorous in the air,
And clash of amorous armour everywhere.

The full, round moon swung on toward the east,
The last gay lad sung homeward from the feast,
The laughing maidens all with drowsy head
Dreaming of lovers, sought a maiden bed.
Then upward with the scent of flowers did float
A voice, across the waters of the moat.

*"The golden bees on summer leas a-drowse
within their secret dells,
From lady-fingers, scented thyme, build up
their store for winter's cells;
Ring out, O purple fox-glove chimes from
every fragrant forest glade,
For that to-night a blessed bride transformèd
be from drooping maid.*

*Doth ever rosebud sigh forlorn that she must
blow beside a thorn?
What dancing breeze among the trees doth
question wherefore it was born?
Too soon, too soon the spherèd moon will faint
upon the blushing dawn,
The rosy feet of day steal up across the far,
star-daisied lawn.*

*A little, laughing cupid now peeps out from
every dimpled smile,
Whilst Venus lies in downcast eyes for her
undoing all the while;
A thousand thousand baby loves are sporting
with her silken hair,
The while sweet Zephyr from the south sets
jealousy a-tremble there.*

*Store thou thy honey, lovers, then, against the
wintry ways of men;
Ere yet thou art busied with the world, and
all its mazèd ways again;
The realm that lies within her eyes is dearer
than a golden throne,
And her love-kiss the only bliss that thou canst
wholly claim thine own!"*

Soon from her fragrant robe her form she slipped,
As bud from bursting sheath, as life from death,
As song from silence,--- yet the bright zone clipped
The heavy folds about the virgin waist,
Consenting not to an uncomely haste.

Prone on his knees he pressed her willing hands
To burning brow, and lip, and fevered cheek,

Though found he not, as yet one word to speak,
But worshipped with his gaze each sweet breast-
bud,
Whilst passion drowned his senses in full flood.

Trembling, his fingers sought the jewelled clasp....
She stood revealed, love's saint immaculate,
Proud in her beauty, meet for such sweet fate
As breaking of pale chastities, consent
In each bright planet of her firmament.

“Your lips, Oh, God! your lips!” she yielded,
slow
Into his arms the pliant body swayed,
Curved back and slender flanks as cool as snow,---
Her gaze enwrapt as some enchanted maid
Who stands in vision by a sunlit stream,
Or a Greek goddess of a Phidian dream.

Lo, had Medusa chilled them twinèd there,
Arms clasping each the other, eye to eye,
Strong flanks of palest gold strained amorous
Of their twin ecstasy, a rose-white thigh;
All who had seen that marble would have burned,
And lovers swift to love's enjoyment turned.



But soon his lips would drink a subtler draught.
The honey-dew that brims between white thighs;
At such an amorous battle Zeus had laughed,
And loved the maid the hotter for her sighs,
As she, between deep breaths would not, yet would,
Longing for fullest conquest, still withstood.

Deep in the fragrant rose the fragrant heart
Revealed now the flower of man's desire,
Set like a jewel in gold of palest fire,
So soon to be transfixèd with love's dart.
And now no more she strives, but with closed eyes
Proves in her flesh love's mysteries.

iv

Oh, long ago the arms that clasped are dust,
Oh, long ago, in days without a name
They sleep, as surely all belovèds must;
Into the dark they go, from whence they came,
Moulded by love into one ardent flame.

Yet in a niche, wrought out of ancient stone,
Warmed by the sun and kissed by winds and rain
She steps from out the storied years again,

Singing of love, regardless of her wheel,
And all the symbols of her saintly seal.

v

Oh, God-head manifest, Oh, riddle solved!
Oh, Mystery unfathomed, you are born
Within the arms, upon the senses sighing,
Upon the rose's scent, and of her thorn
Continually giving birth and dying.

Oh, agony! Oh, raptured Hands transfix'd
Above the world, man imaged You in grief
Wherein the heavenly love was intermixed
With earth's compassion . . . in the bright spring
leaf

I see you born, eternal, in all things brief,

In all things lovely, and in all love blest,
In every sobbing sigh of passion's pain,
In every resignation of love's breast,
That is time's loss, but the eternal gain,
An endless harvesting of heavenly grain.

ENVOI

*How dear thou art, how dear thou art to me!
When storms of life beat low my bended head
Thou camest, and raised my eyes to heaven
again.*

*We have known grief together, ay, and joy;
We have known the night a-throb with sound
and flame,
For that our blood beat to one dancing tune.*

*We have beheld the dawn on distant hills
Together, wakened to the first faint trill
Of springtide blackbird stirring in his nest.*

*And I have turned to thee as bird to bird,
As innocent and beautiful our loves,
Ay, and immortal as the sky and sea.*

*Lo, thou hast kept from death my faith in man,
In this harsh world unmeet for gentle souls;
Peace in the storm and refuge in the strife.*

While drifts the sea-mew amber 'gainst the sun,

*Whilst wild, crushed thyme is sweet beneath
the feet,
Still shall the beauty of our love endure.*

*One with the fixed, revolving world in space,
One with the dew that falls upon the fields,
One with the mind supernal we name God.*

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